

Standard 8-2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the American Revolution—the beginnings of the new American nation and South Carolina’s part in the development of that nation.

8-2.5 Explain the economic and political tensions between the people of the Upcountry and the Lowcountry of South Carolina, including the economic struggles of both groups following the American Revolution, their disagreement over representation in the General Assembly and the location of the new capital city, and the transformation of the state’s economy that was caused by the production of cotton and convinced Lowcountry men to share power with Upcountry men. (H, G, P, E)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand/ Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 3rd grade, students summarized the effects of the American Revolution in South Carolina, including the establishment of a new nation and a new state government and capital (3.3.3).

In 4th grade, students explained the political and economic factors leading to the American Revolution, including the French and Indian War; British colonial policies such as the Stamp Act, the Tea Act, and the so-called Intolerable Acts; and the American colonists’ early resistance through boycotts, congresses, and petitions (4.3.1).

In United States History, students will summarize the distinct characteristics of each colonial region in the settlement and development of America, including religious, social, political, and economic differences (USHC 1.-1).

It is essential for students to know

The tensions between the people of the Upcountry and the Lowcountry of South Carolina were exacerbated by the Revolutionary War as Lowcountry Patriots fought backcountry Loyalists. These tensions continued after the Revolutionary War ended. The Upcountry [After the revolution the backcountry was called the Upcountry] is the area in the northwestern part of the state, originally the home to the Cherokees. The first white settlers to move to the area were traders and woodsmen, so they were viewed by the Lowcountry elite as “uncivilized.” The Lowcountry was the area that surrounded the city of Charleston along the Atlantic coast of the state. The Lowcountry was the first area settled in the state, and eventually the plantation owners in the area grew rich from the export of rice and indigo.

Tension between the regions rested in part on their **economic** differences. Many of the Upcountry folk were subsistence farmers who worked the land. Although a few owned slaves, they did not have large plantations and large slave holdings. Many worked their farms without the assistance of slave labor. The Lowcountry was dominated by the planter elite whose economic well being and social status depended on their slave holdings. Both groups suffered economically as a result of the war. During the war years, fighting ravaged the countryside and slaves, livestock and goods were taken by the British. Once the war ended the economy was slow to improve. The Lowcountry suffered because the mercantilist policies of Great Britain that had offered them economic subsidies and protected markets while South Carolina was a colony were now turned against them as part of an independent United States. The planters also owed money to creditors in England which they could not pay. The American government was also unable to pay for the goods it had commandeered during the fighting from the citizens of the state. Poor crop yields made it even more difficult to recover economically. Economic problems persisted until the early 1800s when cotton became a new cash crop.

During South Carolina's early years, the Lowcountry elite had little respect for the people living in the Upcountry. Political representation was a major source of tension between the Upcountry and the Lowcountry areas. There was a larger white population living in the Upcountry, but most of the political power rested in the Lowcountry. Not only did the Lowcountry have greater representation in the legislature but Charleston was the capital and legal business was transacted there. The Charleston elite had a greater influence on the government. Upcountry people objected to having to travel so far to present issues to the legislature or argue their legal matters in court. In 1785, counties and county courts were created. The next year, the capital was moved to the newly established city of Columbia in the center of the state and equally accessible to both the Upcountry and the Lowcountry. These measures helped ease but did not eliminate political tensions between the Upcountry and the Lowcountry. However, the Lowcountry maintained its majority in the legislature.

Lowcountry planters resisted giving the Upcountry more equal representation in the legislature because they feared that the Upcountry farmers did not support slavery. The invention of the cotton gin made cotton a viable cash crop in the Upcountry and, as a result, the Upcountry had a greater need for slave labor. As the numbers of slaves in the Upcountry increased, the willingness of the Lowcountry to share power increased as well. In the compromise of 1808, the legislature agreed to reapportionment. Representation was to be based equally on the white population and the amount of taxable property (including slaves). Consequently, those areas that had the most slaves continued to have disproportionate control over the legislature. But now both the Lowcountry and the backcountry had their share of slaves and so their share of political power.

It is not essential for students to know:

Students do not need to know that the creation of the college that became the University of South Carolina was first proposed as a concession to the Upcountry folks and as a way to ensure that if Upcountry men got political power in the state at least they might be educated. Students do not need to know the other factors that contributed to the fears of Lowcountry elite about giving greater representation to the Upcountry. Lowcountry men, who were often Federalists, were concerned because Upcountry men were most likely to be members of Jefferson's Democratic Republican Party who supported the French Revolution. The Lowcountry elite feared that the Upcountry's advocacy of French radicalism paired with the recent slave rebellion in Haiti threatened their way of life. Religious revivalism in the Upcountry also contributed to the fear that Upcountry folk were anti-slavery. Religious groups that arose during the Great Awakening which was centered in the Upcountry professed a belief in spiritual equality. As the power of the Federalist Party faded after the election of Jefferson in 1800, the Democratic Republicans of the Lowcountry and the Upcountry had more and more in common. As cotton became a valuable cash crop, economic need overshadowed theology and slavery was more and more accepted as a way of life in the Upcountry.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessment should require students to **explain** the economic and political tensions between the people of the Upcountry and the Lowcountry of South Carolina. Assessment may also require students to **compare** the Lowcountry elite to the Upcountry people economically, socially and politically. Students should be able to **summarize** the economic struggles of both groups following the American Revolution. Students should be able to **explain** their disagreement over representation in the General Assembly and why the location of the new capital city eased these tensions. They should be able to **explain** how the cotton gin transformed the state's economy and convinced Lowcountry men to share power with Upcountry men.